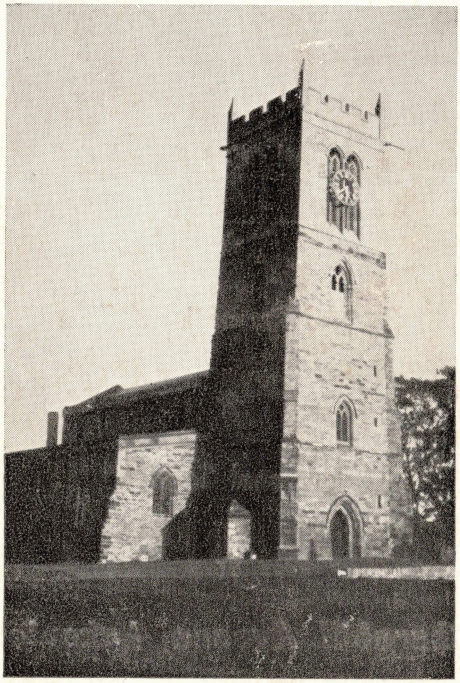
A SHORT GUIDE

to the

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PETER & ST. PAUL

Moulton, Northamptonshire



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THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL MOULTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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The Vicar:

THE REVD. F. ROY CATTELL

MOULTON VICARAGE, NORTHAMPTON, NN3 1RZ

Tel. 41060

N.B.—While every care has been taken in compiling this short Guide and History, and the statements contained therein are believed to be correct, responsibility for any inaccuracies cannot be accepted.

CHURCH GUIDE

A CHURCH has stood at the heart of this village for centuries—it is a silent witness of the hopes and disappointments of a kindly people who have passed through many experiences in their search for God, themselves and one another. All this has produced that indescribable atmosphere which permeates the fabric, transforming the material house of man into the spiritual House of God.

The church is a reminder of our good inheritance, a token of our gratitude, and our remembrance of all who have ministered and worshipped here for over 700 years. We are proud to have entered into their labours and worship, knowing that, as in the past, so in the present and future, the life of this church will flourish so long as men recognise that greatness is not in themselves but in the Master Whom they serve.

Pause then for a while and offer a silent prayer of thankfulness for those who have left us such a goodly inheritance—a story which extends far back into history to the first timber church of early Saxon times, up to the present day; pray, too, for those who shall follow us in the perplexing but momentous days which lie ahead.

ORIGIN AND STORY

1. CHRISTIANS COME TO MOULTON. In the middle of the seventh century Monks came to Moulton from Brixworth Minster or missionary church which was associated with Medehamstede Abbey, the forerunner of Peterborough Cathedral.

2. THE FIRST CHURCH. Early in Saxon times a Christian churchyard Cross was set up in Moulton and open air preaching was the rule. A wooden church was built in 650 A.D. which was believed to have been destroyed by fire by Danish raiders in 900 A.D. The Anglo Saxons built a second wooden church in 960 A.D. which was also burnt by the Danes in 1000 A.D. (approximate dates).

3. NORMAN CHURCH. In 1070 a church was built of sandstone-ironstone from local quarries by the Norman-led people, consisting of an aisleless nave, mentioned in the Domesday survey.

4. MEDIÆVAL CHURCH. In 1264 during the Civil War between Henry III and the Barons much of the Norman Church was destroyed. In 1300 a larger church with chancel, nave, north and south chantry chapels and tower was built in decorated style. Later in the 14th century the south porch was added and the Clerestory built. In 1422 the upper part of the tower was built from Northamptonshire ashlar in Perpendicular style with battlements.

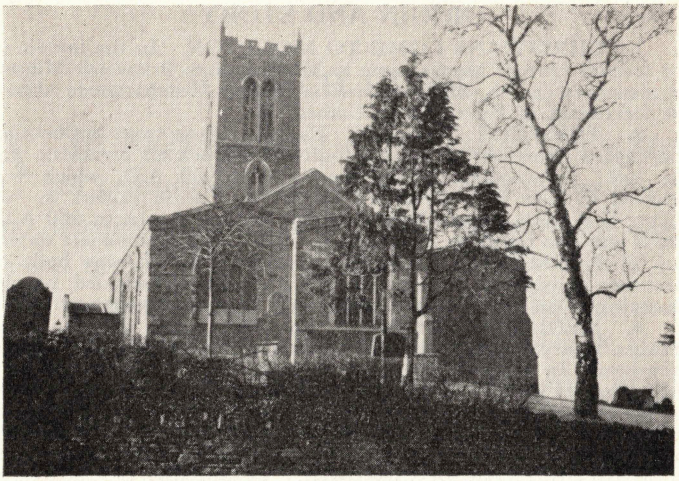
5. THE PRESENT CHURCH. Despite the destruction of stained glass windows, the steeple and other parts of the church during the Civil War, prior to the battle of Naseby in 1646, this church has been mercifully preserved and cared for by successive generations of Christians. Early in the 19th century the Norman font was accidentally broken. In 1887 the church was structurally restored and refurnished.

6. DEDICATION. As far as is known the church was dedicated to St. Peter from the earliest times. In 1300 the south chantry was built and dedicated to St. Paul.

7. SITUATION. Moulton Church stands in the centre of the parish near a tributary of the River Nene, between the Northamptonshire Uplands and the Nene Valley. The area has been peopled from the earliest times as is evidenced by a nearby Stone Age Tumulus and Druid location. There is also evidence of a Roman Villa and of lesser Roman roads in the parish. From the churchyard can be seen evidence of the ancient burial ground towards the north where once stood the Manor House.

THE EXTERIOR

1. SOUTH SIDE. The two stones of Saxon tracery work are of special interest, built into the wall low down between the porch and the tower. Of the four windows from left to right the first is in Decorated style and the other three mainly Perpendicular; the arches are in Tudor style, probably rebuilt in the reign of Henry VII. The sundial at the east end of the South wall has the inscription " Quies in caelo " — " Rest in Heaven ", and above on the eave of the nave at the east end can be seen a sheep carved in stone. The porch is



The Church from the lane facing east

late 14th century and on entering, part of a tomb stone dated 1607 may be seen on the right.

2. EAST END. At the top, left hand corner two further stones of Saxon tracery work can be seen. The south east window is in Decorated style—a good example of bar tracery. The original middle window was destroyed in 1645, and the present one is perpendicular, the tracery known as " Rectilinear " and the arch Tudor. The north east window is in Decorated style of a later date.

3. NORTH SIDE. None of the windows is exactly alike, but all are in Decorated style, and from here we have a view of the clerestory windows, added about 500 years ago when the roof was raised. The masons carved a pig out of stone which can be seen astride the eave of the nave, corresponding to the sheep on the south side. The north doorway is 14th century, the medieval ironwork being preserved and used when the timber was replaced early in 1950. Funeral processions used to pass through this doorway to the churchyard.

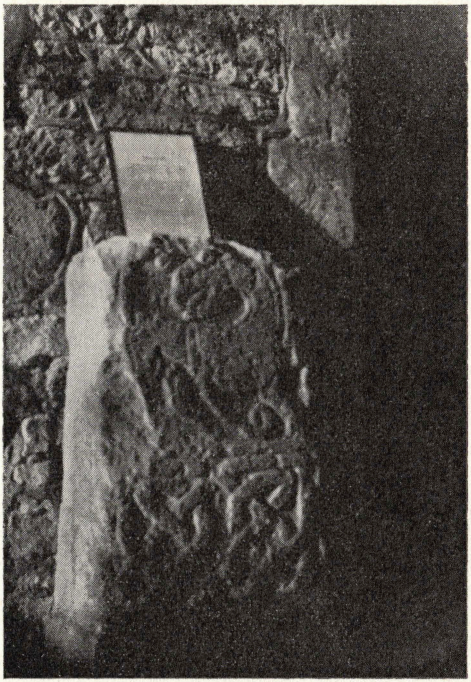
4. THE TOWER. The three lower stages are built of ironstone in Decorated style; the ashlar-faced top storey was added 500 years ago in Perpendicular style, surmounted by a steeple which was taken down in the 17th century. Note the battlements, four gargoyles and pinnacles, the frieze of quarterfoils, pairs of two-light, bell-openings with transom and antique gilded weather cock. The clock and chimes were installed in 1902 as a memorial to a well-loved

village doctor, replacing an earlier clock. The tower was restored in 1958 and a new door fitted at the west end in 1963 as part of the Haxley memorial.

5. THE CHURCHYARD. This has been closed for interments since 1881, when a Parish Cemetery was opened in The Grove. A reorganisation scheme was carried out in 1958 when illegible and broken stones were cleared away, thus enabling the grass to be cut more easily and the whole area kept in good order.

THE INTERIOR

1. THE SOUTH CHANTRY was originally built in the early 14th century and dedicated to St. Paul. In pre-reformation days it was used chiefly for the chanting of prayers for the souls of the faithful departed. Whilst walking towards the east end of the



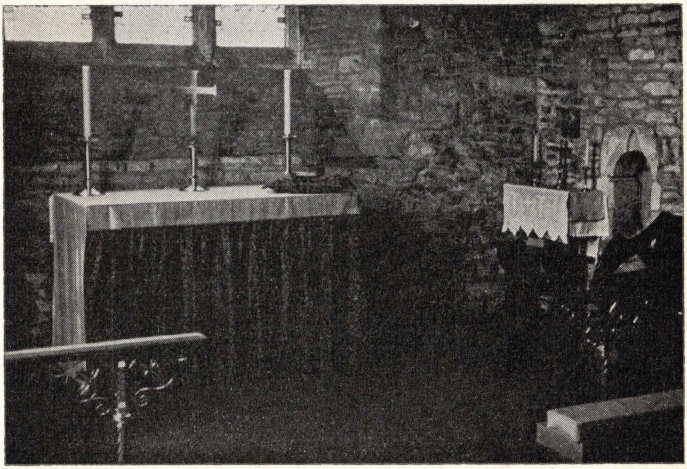
The base of the finely engraved seventh century cross

chantry there will be seen on the right part of the shaft of an early Anglo-Saxon churchyard cross, placed against the south wall, a history of which hangs above it. The piscina in the corner of the south wall is the best of the three in the church. Moulton Parish War Memorials for the two World Wars are situated on the wall west of the main door.

2. THE CHANCEL. The east window is of stained glass depicting the Last Supper, placed there in memory of Philadelphus Jeyes, a resident in the parish who died in 1879. A piscina in Decorated style is on the south side of the sanctuary, also traces of a Norman priest's door and of a window just above can be seen beside the piscina. Three memorials to members of the Nethercote family of Moulton Grange are on the north wall of the sanctuary. The fine high chancel arch affords a clear view of the nave and the west end of the church.

3. THE NORTH CHANTRY. The east window is of stained glass and was given in 1931 in memory of other members of the Jeyes family. There is a piscina in Decorated style, whilst just above this hangs a list of the vicars of Moulton from the year 1209, and nearby a copy of the William Carey Settlement Order made in 1785. Outside the Choir Vestry is a stone cover of an early mediaeval coffin from the grave of a 13th century vicar, Robert de Botelbrigge; above it, in the wall, is a memorial to the Sanderson family, for many generations Lords of the Manor of Moulton and Little Addington.

4. THE ORGAN. A single manual and pedal instrument, built by T. C. Lewis, one of the finest London builders of the last century,



The new Chapel and medieval piscina

was purchased and placed in the North Chantry in 1876, used constantly until 1967 when it was sold and rebuilt in Rothersthorpe Parish Church. Early that year an opportunity occured to procure a fine two manual and pedal organ with twenty speaking stops, built by Bishop and Son, from a large Methodist Church in South London which had become redundant and has since been demolished. This instrument was rebuilt and placed in the South side of the choir and dedicated on 12th April, 1967. The area behind the organ provides a spacious Choir Vestry. The oak Screen was originally erected in 1951 in memory of George Tanner, Choir Master for many years. The Screen was moved from the North to the South side in 1967.

5. THE CHAPEL. The removal of the organ from the North Chantry enabled a Chapel to be formed there, envisaged in 1931 when the Stained Glass Window was given. The Communion Table was the gift of Great Billing Church, the Communion rails were originally in the main Sanctuary, while all other furnishings were given by parishioners in memory of former worshippers. The Chapel was dedicated on 7th January, 1968, and is in regular use.

6. THE NAVE. On the north side are four round arches remaining from the Norman church and, above, a fragment of a Norman window can be seen. The pillars are all different, and each is unique. Witness the start made to encase the old piers no doubt with a view to reconstructing the whole arcade.

There cannot be many examples in existence where mediaeval building can be seen so interestingly. The south arches are pointed, dating from the 14th century, when the ten windows of the clerestory were added and the roof raised. The position of the old roof can be clearly seen above the great Tower arch at the west end. On each side of the chancel arch are openings in the walls where the beams of the rood screen rested. The font, pulpit and lectern were placed in the church at the Restoration in 1884. Baptismal Roll panels are on view at the west end of the church near the font.

The oak screen at the west end of the north aisle forming an additional vestry was erected in 1962 in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Haxley and their elder son Archibald. A memorial to members of the Madge family will be found on the north wall and an antique chest stands in front of the north doorway.

7. THE TOWER. On the west wall of the belfry are two stained glass windows showing the Patron Saints of the church—St. Peter with his keys and St. Paul with his sword. The ringing chamber contains a well known and remarkably fine peal of eight bells. There is a tradition that a bell was brought to Moulton church in 1538, just before the Dissolution of the Monastries, when Francis Abree came to be Vicar—he was the last prior of St. Andrew's Cluniac Priory, Northampton. In 1795 the original five bells were recast into a "ring of six" by Mr. Edward Arnold, Bell-Founder, Hangmans Lane, Leicester. In 1933 the last two bells were added by Dr. Sidney Madge, one as a memorial to William Carey, pioneer missionary to India and founder of the Baptist Missionary Society, who lived and worked in Moulton and bears his famous

CHURCH REGISTERS AND PEOPLE
VARIOUS TOPICS OF INTEREST

1. REGISTERS. The Church Registers are nearly complete from the time written records were kept. Baptisms and Burials date from 1565, whilst marriages are recorded from 1566. The great books are kept in an old oak chest in the vestry of the church, many of them are easily legible.

Words on the first page are to this effect: " The Register Book of Moulton containing the names of all that have bine Baptised, Maryed and Buryed and from the year of our Lord 1565 and so forward ".

" This the day the Lord hath made, wee will rejoyce in it ". A very interesting record of family names, variations of occupations and other local information exists. Indications as to the personal health of villagers are made and events of all kinds are told. Dr. Sidney Madge, the notable Moulton antiquarian, carried out important researches into Moulton Parish Registers and was instrumental in having all the early volumes published.

2. MOULTON CHARITIES. Known Charities associated with Moulton Church and Parish are from endowments left from the year 1632 until recent years. The names of some of these thoughtful benefactors are as follows:

ROBERT MILLS, MARTHA SPRAGGETT, JOHN FRANCIS, SAMUEL NASH ADAMS and WILLIAM BARBER.

Money was left for the benefit of aged widows of Moulton and for their needs. According to the documents, some ancient, it was prescribed that provisions, coal or money were to be given to widows on each St. Stephen's Day in Church and that a sermon should be preached. This practice still continues on Boxing Day morning each year.

Some of these were Church Charities and some Parish Charities. All the money is now assembled in one fund called " The Charities Official Investment Fund ", the interest accruing each year is administered by the Vicar and Churchwardens. One of the fields in the South of the parish still has the name " Widows' Field ", presumably bearing witness to the manner in which the funds of the Charities were invested in former years.

In addition to the foregoing group of Charities, there was one other devoted to Education, called the Town and Poor Estates Charity of Moulton. First endowed in 1835 when there were very few school for country people, it continued until 1882, when it was wound up.

3. WALL PAINTINGS. It is known that the interior walls of the church were covered by wall plaster until the restoration, started in the year 1890. The plaster was at that time very old and in poor condition, we are told, and was accordingly removed.

It could well have been that Medieval wall paintings used for centuries to interpret the stories of the Bible to the people were unknowingly also removed at that time.

There is no certain record of such paintings in Moulton Church, but we do know of many churches in this part of Northamptonshire which still have wall paintings of fine workmanship and great beauty.

OLD CHESTS. There are two fine old timber chests in the church, one by the north door and the other in the vestry. They are understood to be of seventeenth and eighteenth century construction and were most probably made locally. The dowelled fastenings in the construction of the chests, both darkened with age, are of much interest, as are the types of hinges used and the remnants of the security fittings. These sturdy oak chests of considerable character could well, if they were able, tell many stories of Vicars and Churchwardens and of their care and devotion to the service of Christ in Moulton Parish.

BOUGHTON GREEN FAIR AND MOULTON

1. On an elevated site adjoining Moulton Parish there is situated a beautiful open space set with fine beeches called Boughton Green.

2. Here for three days annually a great concourse of people assembled at midsummer from far and near.

3. The Fair, dedicated to St. John Baptist after the dedication of the never failing well in the hollow there, was held on St. John's Day—24th June.

4. By Royal Charter of King Edward III Boughton Green Fair was established in 1351 and continued each year until 1917—a span of 565 years.

5. The traditional purposes of the Fair were mainly for the trading of all kinds of goods, for sporting events and leisure pursuits of customary usage and for buying and selling all kinds of livestock.

6. The clergy from six parishes around used to join in the celebrations at the church of St. John the Baptist, in the hollow by the Green. Johnswell and Boughton Fair Close are still the names of fields in Moulton Parish.

7. Boughton Green Fair provided a great meeting place, a superb sporting and trading rendezvous and an annual time of enjoyment for ordinary country folk. Its effect over so many years upon Moulton Parish, its Church and people must have been considerable.

MOULTON CHURCH

Summary of History of Diocesan Succession from earliest times

1. Christianity was introduced into Mercia through St. Aidan, A.D. 635 and St. Finan, A.D. 651, Bishops of Lindisfarne (Durham).

2. Missionary Bishops of Mercia (Central England) 656-680 A.D. Seven Bishops in succession. Moulton was then associated with Leicester.

3. Bishop's of Leicester A.D. 680-870. See of the Middle Angles. Twelve Bishops in succession.

4 Bishops of Dorchester on Thame (Oxfordshire) A.D. 870-1092. Note the terrible Danish invasions and occupation. Fourteen Bishops in succession. Covered ten counties. Note 1067—first Norman Bishop (fourteenth of Dorchester) founder Lincoln Cathedral.

5. Bishops of Lincoln A.D. 1092-1541. Also covered the same ten counties from the Thames to the Humber. Thirty two Bishops in succession. One was Thomas Wolsey 1514.

6. Bishops of Peterborough A.D. 1541- . Endowed from the spoils of the suppressed Monastries. Counties of Northampton and Rutland. The last Abbot of Peterborough became the first Bishop.

Note: The last Prior of St. Andrew's Priory, Northampton, who was Vicar of Moulton in 1540, became the first Dean of Peterborough.

A PRAYER

O Lord, may thy blessing rest upon thy church in this place.
Here may the faithful find salvation and the careless be awakened.
Here may the doubting find faith and the anxious be encouraged.
Here may the weary find rest and the strong be renewed.
Here may the aged find consolation and the young be inspired
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"I was glad when they said unto me: we will go into the house of the Lord". Psalm 122.

NOTES

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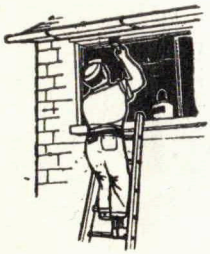

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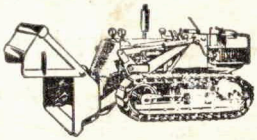
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